



HEAL Coalition ALERT: Growing Concern with Massage Therapy Programs Using Distance Education

As recent articles in the *Career Education Review* and *Massage Today* have highlighted, institutions that offer massage therapy programs may be unwittingly placing students at risk of violating National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) certification and state licensing eligibility requirements.

How? Simply by providing students with the ability to use distance education and on-line learning to fulfill portions of the 500 hours of “in-class, supervised instruction” required under NCBTMB standards issued in June 2005.

Under the strict interpretation of the NCBTMB’s standards, any student taking a portion of their Massage Therapy program using distance education is prohibited from taking the national certifying exam, the exam many states require in order to become a licensed massage therapist.

Without this certification, students in many states cannot become licensed and will be unable to become employed as massage therapists, even though they have been properly educated and are capable of employment within the field.

With Congress having recently enacted legislation as part of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act expanding student access to distance education, this decision by the NCBTMB is problematic to say the least.

As a result, the Higher Education Allied Health Leaders (HEAL) Coalition believes that Congress must be made aware of this issue in light of the potential impact it can have on all students’ ability to enter the profession upon successful completion of Massage Therapy programs that include the use of distance education as a portion of the training.

As an institution offering Massage Therapy programs, the HEAL Coalition is concerned that your institution may be at risk. If you either currently offer, or are considering offering portions of your program via distance education in the future, these students may not be eligible to sit for the certifying exam necessary to become licensed and employed as a massage therapist.

If this issue concerns you, please join the HEAL Coalition today, and together we can educate Congress and make them aware of the negative impact this will have on students.

If you are interested in joining us, or would like more information regarding the HEAL Coalition, contact Executive Director Tom Netting at (202) 626-8553.